

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 05621 241604Z

43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

IO-13 AID-05 SCCT-01 /077 W
----- 105586

R 241400Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9254

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 5621

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJECT: SYRIAN PRIMIN SEES SYRO-EGYPTIAN RECONCILIATION
AS PRIORITY ITEM

1. SYRIAN PRIMIN KHYLAYFAWI SEES SYRO-EGYPTIAN RAPPROCHE-
MENT AS FIRST REQUIREMENT FOR RESTORING CALM TO LEBANON.
SYRIA CANNOT WITHDRAW FROM ITS COMMITMENT OF TROOPS AND
PRESTIGE WITHOUT CLEARLY HAVING HELPED ACHIEVE A SETTLEMENT.
PROGRESS SLOW IN REBUILDING LEBANOESE ARMY. USG SHOULD PLAY
MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN LEBANON. END SUMMARY.

2. PAID 45-MINUTE COURTESY CALL ON NEW PRIMIN KHULAYFAWI
AUGUST 24. PRIMIN TURNED OUR CONVERSATION REPEATEDLY TO
ILL EFFECTS THE LEBANESE CRISIS WAS HAVING ON SYRIA AND
THE MIDDLE EAST GENERALLY. HE OBSERVED THAT THERE WAS
NOT A SINGLE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT PROGRAM UNAFFECTED BY
THE PRESENCE OF UPWARDS OF ONE MILLION REFUGEES FROM
LEBANON, THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF WHOM HE CHARACTER-
IZED AS POOR AND NEEDING STATE ASSISTANCE.

3. SYRIA, HOWEVER, WAS NOW COMMITTED IN LEBANON AND PRIMIN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 05621 241604Z

COULD NOT FORESEE SYRIA RETREATING FROM ITS COMMIT-

MENT, INCLUDING THAT OF ITS MILITARY FORCES ALREADY THERE, UNTIL IT HAD ACHIEVED SOME TANGIBLE ADVANCE TOWARDS A PEACE SETTLEMENT. I ASKED ABOUT STORIES CIRCULATING IN BEIRUT LEFTIST PRESS THAT SYRIAN MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THE BEKAA HAD RECENTLY BEEN TARGETS OF SUCCESSFUL ASSASSINATIONS BY LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS OPPOSED TO THE SYRIAN PRESENCE. KHULAYFAWI STATED THESE REPORTS WERE CATEGORICALLY UNTRUE AND THAT SYRIAN TROOPS WERE MAINTAINING CALM IN THE AREAS WHERE THEY WERE PRESENT AND EXPERIENCING NO UNUSUAL FRICTIONS WITH THE LOCAL POPULATION. HE ADDED IN PASSING THAT HE WAS AMONG THOSE SYRIANS WHO FELT HIS OWN GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE ACTED MORE DECISIVELY A YEAR AGO THROUGH COMMITMENT OF MAJOR MILITARY FORCE. THIS COOULD HAVE FORESTALLED THE INCREASINGLY MORE COMPLICATED POLITICAL AND MILITARY SCENE IN LEBANON.

4. ASKED ABOUT PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING THE "VANGUARDS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY," KHULAYFAWI SAID HE FELT IT WOULD BE A LONG TIME BEFORE THIS FORCE COULD TAKE OVER SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE COUNTRY. HE AGREED WITH THOSE WHO SUGGESTED IT MIGHT TAKE AS LONG AS ONE TO TWO YEARS. THE NEW ARMY SHOULD BE LESS CONFESSIONAL IN NATURE THAN THE FORMER LEBANESE FORCE BUT CONFESSIONALISM WAS DEEP IN THE LEBANESE BODY POLITIC AND COULD NOT BE UPROOTED OVERNIGHT. ONE DIFFICULTY FACING THE VANGUARD AT PRESENT WAS THAT ITS MEMBERSHIP WAS TOO HEAVILY MOSLEM. OF COURSE AN EFFECTIVE ARMY IN LEBANON NEED NOT HAVE THE STRENGTHS REQUIRED BY ARMIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES. THE ISRAELIS HAD ALWAYS JOKED ABOUT THE FORMER LEBANESE ARMY AS BEING BEST SUITED FOR SINGING AND DRINKING. HE AGREED WITH THE ISRAELI ESTIMATION.

5. PRIMIN SAID HE WAS DONFIDENT THAT SARKIS WOULD TAKE OVER FROM FRANGIE ON SEPTEMBER 23 AND WAS OUTSPOKENLY CRITICAL OF WHAT HE TERMED "THAT GANGSTER'S" INEPT PERFORMANCE IN OFFICE. THE YOUNGER GENERATION OF LEADERS WERE OCCUPIED IN FIGHTING. WHEN THEY EVENTUALLY TOOK OVER, AND HE NAMED NO NAMES, THERE WOULD INEVITABLY BE A JOCKEYING FOR POSITION AND A MUTUAL PURGE A LA ALGERIA.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DAMASC 05621 241604Z

6. U.S. ROLE:

PRIMIN SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THE USG COULD HAVE PLAYED A MORE VIGOROUS ROLE IN HELPING SETTLE THE LEBANESE CRISIS THAN WE HAD DONE TO DATE. PERHAPS THE CURRENT VISIT OF DEPARTMENTAL OFFICERS TO JOUNIEH WOULD PROVIDE US MATERIAL ON WHICH TO BASE A NEW INITIATIVE. I SAID THAT WE WERE ALL LOOKING FORWARD TO RECEIVING REPORTS

FROM THESE OFFICERS WHOSE VISIT CONSTITUTED OUR FIRST CONTACT WITH THE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP SINCE AMBASSADOR BROWN'S MISSION THREE MONTHS AGO. I HAD TOLD SARG FONMINISTRY WE PLANNED KEEP SARG INFORMED OF RESULTS THEIR CONVERSATIONS. WAS PRIMIN, HOWEVER, SUGGESTING THAT AN ENHANCED U.S. ROLE WOULD BE FUNDAMENTAL TO A LEBANESE SETTLEMENT? NO, HE REPLIED, THE BASIC NEED WAS FOR EGYPTIAN-SYRIAN RAPPROCHMENT. THAT WOULD BE UNQUESTIONABLY THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO LOWERING THE TEMPERATURE IN LEBANON. SYRIA, HE NOTED, HAD JUST AGREED TO ATTEND THE ARAB SUMMIT AND THIS MIGHT BE HELPFUL, ALTHOUGH AS FAR AS HE KNEW NO DATES FOR THE CONFERENCE HAD BEEN AGREED UPON.

7. COMMENT:

I WAS PARTICULARLY STRUCK BY THE PRIMIN'S EMPHASIS THAT SYRIA NEEDED AN EARLY SETTLEMENT TO THE LEBANESE CRISIS AND THAT A SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN RAPPROCHEMENT WAS THE SINE QUA NON TO BRING THIS ABOUT. HE MENTIONED ONLY BRIEFLY THE NEED FOR SOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AS BEING BASIC TO A FINAL SETTLEMENT IN LEBANON. OUR CONVERSATION WAS IN ARABIC WITH THE OCCASIONAL FRENCH WORD THROWN IN BY THE PRIMIN. (HE NOTED HE HAD SPENT SOME TIME AS YOUNG MAN IN FRANCE WHERE AMONG OTHER SPORTS HE HAD BEEN A MOTORCYCLE ACROBAT.) THE DIMINUTIVE PRIMIN SPOKE ANIMATEDLY, PERCHED ON THE EDGE OF HIS CHAIR THROUGHOUT. HE SPEAKS QUICKLY, DECISIVELY AND WITHOUT CIRCUMLOCUTIONS. THE INFORMALITY OF HIS MANNER WAS ACCENTED BY THE DAZZLING QUALITY OF HIS ELECTRIC BLUE SUIT. KHULAYFAWI IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION PROJECTS WLL THE VITALITY AND FIRMNESS POPULARLY ATTRIBUTED TO HIM. HIS MIND MOVES QUICKLY AND IF HIS HEALTH HOLDS UP HE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 DAMASC 05621 241604Z

SHOULD BRING A GOOD DEAL MORE SPARKLE AND VITALITY TO THE ROLE OF THE PRIMIN THAN DID HIS PREDECESSOR MOHAMMAD AYYOUBI. DAMASCUS RADIO HAS JUST ANNOUNCED THAT KHULAYFAWI LEAVES TOMORROW FOR AMMAN AS HEAD OF SYRIAN DELEGATION FOR JOINT COMMISSION TALKS.
MURPHY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, CONCILIATION, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DAMASC05621
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760323-0609
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760827/aaaaawjb.tel
Line Count: 160
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <08 OCT 2004 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN PRIMIN SEES SYRO-EGYPTIAN RECONCILIATION AS PRIORITY ITEM
TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006